

Alongside Skrillex's rise, dubstep is becoming pop's buzziest new word. But figuring out what the hell it means is another story altogether.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY
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"WHO GON STOP ME," from Jay-Z and Kanye West's *Watch the Throne*, begins with an orbiting, distorted vocal sample, then explodes into a rush of quaking bottom-end and pulsating, chunky mid-range. These are the blatant hallmarks of dubstep, the floor-shaking, multifaceted electronic music that began on South London pirate radio nearly a decade ago and now peppers U.S. pop radio. If you're looking for a belated moment to signal this genre's American takeover, you could do worse.

"Who Gon Stop Me" won't break dubstep, though, because dubstep, depending on your perspective, already has arrived broken, dead, or unrecognizable. Similarly, recent dubstep-inflected pop tracks by Britney Spears, Snoop Dogg, Rihanna, and Korn are mile markers, not destinations. This is, in part, because American audiences and artists are caught in a geographical divide that has fractured the genre's identity.

"The stuff that's popular in America is different than the London dubstep sound," explains Drew Beez, cofounder of Los Angeles-based Smog, one of America's first dubstep parties. "The scene in America is massive. It's way bigger than it is in the U.K." This massiveness is a tribute to the music's power, but also to the support of Beez, along with scene starters like New York's Dave Q and Joe Nice, and the Bay Area's Nick Argon and Bassnectar.

Dubstep may be the closest British analog

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DUBSTEP 101

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Skrillex, shot for
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